

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04  
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P R 191728Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8093  
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
USSOUTHCOM  
AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO  
AMCONSUL CALI POUCH  
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA POUCH  
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 4779

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, CO  
SUBJECT: POLITICAL SUMMARIES: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. A BRIEF STRIKE BY GOVERNMENT WORKERS AND CMNTINUING VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS ROILED THE PRE-ELECTION ATMOSPHERE, BUT DID NOT HINDER COMPAIGNING FOR THE JUNE 4 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. WITH ITS OWN ELECTION LOOMING, THE GOC EXPRESSED ITS CONCERN OVER IRREGULARITIES IN THE ELECTIONS INTHE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. THE BILATERAL TEXTILE AGREEMENT WAS RENEWED, DMINISHING COLOMBIAN CHARGES OF U.S. PROTECTIONISM. KIDNAPPINGS CONTINUED TO EARN HEADLINES AS TWO VICTIMS WERE FREED. END SUMMARY.

2. GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES STRIKE; VIOLENCE CONTINUES. OFFICIAL EMPLOYEES STAGED A 24-HOUR STRIKE ON MAY 18 IN THE WAKE OF SEVERAL DAYS OF SCATTERED VIOLENCE AND A MAY 16 TRANSPORT STRIKE, AND DESPITE THE GOVERNMENT'S LAST MINUTE EFFORTS TM SATISFY AT LEAST SOME OF THEIR DEMANDS, INCLUDING A PAY RAISE (BOGOTA 4630).  
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WHILE MANY GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND SCHOOLS, INCLUDING THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, WERE CLOSED OR OPERATING WITH REDUCED STAFFS, MOST BUSINESS ACTIVITIES WERE RELATIVELY UNAFFECTED BY THE STRIKE. HEAVY SECURITY PATROLS WERE ON HAND IN BOGOTA AND OTHER MAJOR CITIES, HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE PREVIOUS DAYS' VIOLENCE WHICH HAS CONTINUED, BUT ON A REDUCED SCALE. COMMENT: FURTHER DISTURBANCES COULD FLARE-UP IF A STUDENT SHOT RECENTLY IN MEDELLIN, REPORTEDLY

BY POLICE, SHOULD DIE. UP TO NOW, SECURITY FORCES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONTAIN THE VIOLENCE WHICH HAS BEEN LIMITED MAINLY TO ATTACKS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND OFFICIAL OR DIPLOMATIC VEHICLES. THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS CONFIDENT THAT TENSIONS WILL EASE IN TIME TO ASSURE A PEACEFUL PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ON JUNE 4, BUT IT WILL KEEP SECURITY FORCES ON ALERT AS A PRECAUTION.

3. CAMPAIGNING AND MANEUVERING CONTINUE. SPECULATION SURFACED REGARDING A POSSIBLE CABINET CRISIS. VIRTUALLY ALL LIBERAL CONGRESSMEN, MEETING IN CLOSED SESSION, ENDORSED A STATEMENT WHICH REFERRED TO "CONTINUED CHARGES BY THE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE OF MORAL DISSOLUTION IN THE GOVERNMENT" AND EXPRESSED THEIR FULL SUPPORT FOR LIBERAL CABINET MINISTERS. THE STATEMENT CALLED ON THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY TO SIMILARLY ENDORSE THE BEHAVIOR OF ITS CABINET MINISTERS. COMMENT: WHILE CONSERVATIVE CAMPAIGN ORATORY INCREASINGLY CRITICIZES PRESIDENT LOPEZ' GOVERNMENT, ROUGHLY HALF OF LOPEZ' MINISTERS ARE CONSERVATIVES. THE LIBERAL DOCUMENT SEEMS DESIGNED TO CALL ATTENTION TO THIS ANOMALOUS SITUATION AND REDUCE THE HEAT OF CONSERVATIVE ATTACKS. IF THE FACTIONALIZED CONSERVATIVE PARTY IS UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO UNDERWRITE ITS MINISTERS, THE LATTER MAY FEEL OBLIGED TO TENDER THEIR RESIGNATIONS. SUCH A MOVE, HOWEVER, WOULD PROBABLY BE SYMBOLIC IN NATURE. END COMMENT. INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE RETIRED-GENERAL VALENCIA TOVAR ANNOUNCED HE WOULD NO LONGER CONTRIBUTE ARTICLES TO EL TIEMPO, IN PROTEST OVER THAT DAILY'S EDITORIAL ENDORSEMENT OF EX-PRESIDENT ALBERTO LLERAS' CHARGES THAT VALENCIA'S VIEWS WERE CONFIDENTIAL

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FASCISTIC (BOGOTA 4524). VALENCIA HAD TOLD THE AMBASSADOR PRIVATELY THAT HE WAS FINDING IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO HAVE HIS ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN EL TIEMPO. PUBLIC EXPECTATION TO SEE THE SECOND PART OF A TELEVISED INTERVIEW OF VALENCIA WAS DISAPPOINTED AS THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED STATION SEEMED UNABLE TO FIND TIME FOR IT IN ITS SCHEDULE. ON THE OTHER HAND, FAIR PLAY SEEMS TO HAVE TRIUMPHED WHEN THE STATE COUNCIL OVERRULED THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED STATIONS'S DECISION NOT TO GRANT TV TIME ALLOTTED TO CANDIDATES TO TROTSKYITE CANDIDATE SOCORRO RAMIREZ ON THE GROUNDS THAT SHE DID NOT POSSESS THE CONSTITUTIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (MINIMUM AGE) TO BECOME PRESIDENT. UNLESS THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS APPEALS THE DECISION, MISS RAMIREZ WILL BE ALLOWED TO UTILIZE HER FOUR HALF-HOUR TV SEGMENTS.

4. GOC EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER DOMINICAN ELECTORAL DISORDERS. THE GOC ISSUED AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT EXPRESSING ITS CONCERN OVER THE IRREGULARITIES WHICH OCCURRED IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, WITH THE HOPE THAT "ANY THREAT TO THE FREEDOMS OF THE DOMINICAN PEOPLE WILL SOON DISAPPEAR." FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO CONFIRMED THIS CONCERN PRIVATELY TO THE AMBASSADOR AND OFFERED TO JOIN WITH THE U.S. AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS TO "SAFE-GUARD DOMINICAN DEMOCRACY" (BOGOTA 4658, 4688). LIEVANO ALSO AGREED TO PHONE OAS SECRETARY GENERAL ORFILA TO STRESS THE IMPORT-

ANCE OF MAINTAINING THE OAS TEAM IN SANTO DOMINGO ((BOGOTA 4754).

COMMENT: IN ADDITION TO COLOMBIA'S GENERAL SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS AND THE PARTICIPATION OF FORMER PRESIDENT PASTRANA IN THE OAS ELECOTRAL OBSERVER TEAM, THE GOC PROBABLY ALSO HAS IN MIND ITS OWN JUNE 4 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (SEE PAR 2).

5. TEXTILE NEGOTIATIONS COMPLETED. AFTER SIX DAYS OF NEGOTIATION, THE U.S. AND COLOMBIA REACHED AGREEMENT ON MAY 13 RENEWING THE BILATERAL TEXTILE AGREEMENT FOR FOUR YEARS. WHILE THE U.S. DELEGATION WAS ABLE TO NEGOTIATE REASONABLE INCREASES IN MOST CATEGORIES, WOLL SUITS WERE DIFFICULT, WITH THE U.S. SIDE LIMITED TO AUTHORIZING AN INCREASE OF ONLY ONE PERCENT. A GOC PRESS RELEASE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WAS POSITIVE INTONE. PRE-CONFIDENTIAL

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DICTABLE, HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN SOME GRUMBLING FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

6. SECURITY SITUATION. MOST SECURITY INCIDENTS DURING THE WEEK WERE CONNECTED WITH THE TRANSPORTATION STRIKE (PAR 2). IN CESAR DEPARTMENT, HOWEVER, A BUS WAS ATTACKED ANF DESTROYED, APPARENTLY BY CRIMINAL ELEMENTS. TEN PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND SEVERAL INJURED IN THE INCIDENT WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A BUNGLED HIGHWAY ROBBERY. ONE KIDNAPPED VICTIM WAS RELEASED BY HIS CAPTORS WHEN HE SUFFERED A SEVERE ASTHMA ATTACK AND ANOTHER, A YOUNG GIRL, WAS FREED BY A WELL-EXECUTED POLICE ACTION IN BOGOTA. COMMENT: POLICE HAVE RESCUED A NUMBER OF KIDNAPPED PERSONS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR AND HAVE RECEIVED FAVORABLE PUBLICITY FOR IT. THIS MIGHT ENCOURAGE FAMILIES OF KIDNAP VICTIMS TO COOPERATE MORE WITH THE AUTHORITIES.  
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